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# LMX Theory Related to Administrator and Educator Perceptions

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LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE THEORY IN ADMINISTRATOR AND  
EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE COLLABORATIVE NATURE  
OF THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT RELATED TO  
SPECIAL EDUCATOR RETENTION

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Theodore Darid Mauro  
December 2007

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Accepted by:  
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## ABSTRACT

Retaining qualified special educators has been a persistent challenge for school districts nationwide. Given that research findings have identified the presence of a supportive principal as a vital factor in the retention of special educators, it is imperative that this pressing issue be further examined. The purpose of this study was to examine differences in the perceptions of principals (ADM), general educators (GET), and special educators (SET) across nine schools in a South Carolina school district regarding what constitutes a supportive and collaborative school environment. Specifically, (a) do administrators, educators and special educators have different perceptions of the collaborative nature of their schools? and (b) do factors such as years of teaching experience and receiving educational leadership training influence perceptions of collaboration?

Data were collected from building-level administrators (principals), general educators, and special educators from elementary, middle and high schools in the Pickens County school district of South Carolina. The data collection instrument was a combination of the Special Education Teacher Support Questionnaire and the LMX-MDM survey instrument along with six additional questions regarding years of teaching experience, subject matter taught, level taught, certification type, educational leadership training and educational level. Results were analyzed using a hierarchical linear model (HLM) method of statistical measurement in light of the Leader-Member Exchange theory (LMX).

Results were non-conclusive regarding perceptions of the collaborative nature of their schools among special education teachers, general education teachers, and administrators. However, responses from teachers with the longest teaching experiences were more likely to agree with principal responses. In contrast, responses from teachers who indicated receiving educational leadership training were less likely to agree with principal responses.

## DEDICATION

In loving memory of my mother, Darolene S. Mauro, who always believed in me even when I doubted myself. You were always there when the chips were down. Mom – I wish you were here, but I know you are watching and cheering!

To my father, T. Brent Mauro, Esq., who attended every boring school play and hockey game and drove me to kindergarten because he thought it was important. You always valued education as a great investment, and the truth even more. You were and always will be my hero. Thank you.

To my two wonderful sisters, Darcy S. Mauro and Kandy M. Ryan: A brother couldn't ask for better sisters. I thank you for your love and support throughout my life. I love you both!

For Peter, Matthew, Nicolas, and Abigail – you all are rays of sunshine in my life.

In memory of Grandma Mauro – Natalie always loved graduations and the punch afterwards. I can't drive by Clemson Downs without thinking of her.

To Ray and Nancy Baldyga – you're the best!

To my best of friends: Douglas Frain, James Millar, Philip O'Brien, and Andrew Smith. "Good Friends are angels who lift our feet when our own wings have trouble remembering how to fly." – Unknown

To people with disabilities and those who serve and love them: Your bodies may be broken, but your spirit and determination will live forever. Thank you for constant reminders of what is truly important in life.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for the time, advice, and support from my committee chairman, Dr. Jackson L. Flanigan. Your continued dedication to students of all ages and to the welfare of this great republic is a testament that will endure with me forever. Your ongoing input and continual support have been invaluable, but I'm still going to call you for advice!

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I owe an invaluable debt of gratitude to Allison Caldwell. Allison, you are the best! You are also brilliant, talented, funny and (especially) organized. Thanks for being the one I can always count on to lighten things up.

To all my friends and colleagues at Clemson University and the Youth Learning Institute – keep helping all types of children to succeed.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background and Significance of the Problem

Persistent concern over academic achievement has led Congress to enact the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, far-reaching legislation likely to exert a profound influence on all aspects of education. NCLB establishes stringent requirements regarding accountability (i.e., adequate yearly progress [AYP] provisions), mandates that students be taught by highly qualified teachers (HQ), and ensures the use of scientifically based instruction with the goal of increasing academic achievement (Jameson & Huefner, 2006).

Research findings have consistently identified the role of the classroom teacher as an important and influential factor on academic achievement. This role is even of greater importance for students with disabilities. For these students, the teacher is crucial in developing their ability to function in the less restrictive environments in addition to improving academic, functional, and social skills. Unfortunately, finding, training, and retaining these teachers has been a challenge for school districts across the nation for decades (Billingsley, 2004a; Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007).

As the number of students with disabilities grows, the demand for special educators will become even more pressing. In 2004, the year that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed, over 98% of all U.S. school districts reported an unfilled special education position (*Implementing the no child left behind teacher requirements*, 2007). With the passing of NCLB, the demands to find HQ

teachers added new pressure to not only fill those positions with licensed staff, but teachers with even greater advanced credentials. Over the next 10 years, it is predicted that over a quarter of a million new special education teachers will be needed nationwide to address projected needs. Anticipated shortfalls are further exacerbated by reports that special educators are leaving the field at twice the rate of general educators (Duffy & Forgan, 2004; Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007). For example, in 2008 there will be a need for 611,550 special education teachers in the United States. Yet every year, about 13.2% of special educators leave their positions. Six percent leave the field altogether, while 7.2% transfer to general education positions. Within the first three years of teaching, 29% of beginning teachers are projected to leave the profession. By the end of the fifth year, that number jumps to 39% (Billingsley, 2004b). In sum, increasing numbers of special education students, not enough qualified personnel currently or projected in the near future, and larger number of special educators leaving the field because of retirement has created a near “perfect storm” of challenges for administrators who must fill those critical positions.

While administrators may have little control or influence over many of these factors, they do have substantial influence over their school’s climate, a factor that has consistently been linked to special educators’ intent to remain in or leave their field (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004). Thus, in various studies, factors leading to increased stress, burnout, and career changes for special educators were directly related to the perception of poor working environments, lack of support from administrators, inadequate job preparation, large caseloads, and low salary (Fore, Martin, & Bender,

2002). In contrast, those who remained in special education indicated less stress and more satisfaction in the areas of job preparation, caseload and caseload diversity, personal teaching efficacy, and administrator support.

While extensive research has revealed that many issues affect the retention of special educators, surprisingly few studies have focused on the specific issue of administrator support and the relational perceptions of teachers and administrators. As pressure increases upon the school based administrator to show improved student achievement and maintain a highly qualified staff, the need to address special educator retention issues will become more critical in the coming years. Studies of perceptions of the collaborative nature of relationships – or lack thereof – between teachers and administrators within their shared work environment of a single school have taken on new urgency.

Because of renewed focus upon increased achievement across the spectrum of students and schools as a result of NCLB, and with the continual stream of data supporting the pivotal influence of HQ teachers on student progress, it is important to further examine the nature of school environments in hopes of improving teacher retention. By developing a better understanding of administrators' perceptions of school culture and comparing it to that of educators within their schools, we will have a better understanding of the significance of administrative support – not only for special educators, but for teachers in general.

Special educators face many challenges that are similar to those faced by general educators, but they also face several unique challenges. Regardless, all teachers continue

to cite the importance of administrator support as it relates to effective school climate and their desire to remain in the profession. Few studies have attempted to determine if these two groups of teachers perceive supportive environments differently within the same schools and with the same administrators.

### General Statement of the Problem

Inadequate administrative support is linked to more role problems, less job satisfaction, increased stress, lower levels of commitment, and fewer professional development opportunities. Not surprisingly, lack of administrative support is a major work environment reason given by special educators for leaving their jobs. Effective special educators make a major impact on student achievement. It is, therefore, in the best interest of students, teachers, administrators, and whole communities to retain these most valuable teachers.

### Research Questions

Could administrator assessment of school climate be perceived differently by teachers in general and special education and, if so, could this difference of perception explain part of the difficulties related to retaining special educators? Only by understanding if there is a disconnect between special educator and administrator perceptions of collaboration can we attempt to explain the reported difficulty cited in the realm of administrative support and determine the best way to address it.

Further research is needed to determine how administrators view the difference in needs and issues of both teacher groups. Do administrators and special educators have



similar perceptions of the collaborative nature within their schools? How do these perceptions differ among special and general educators, and which group's perceptions more closely reflect that of administrators? Do factors such as years of experience and administrative training affect educators' perceptions of administrative support?

### Conceptual Framework

This study compared individual principals' perceptions of their own level of administrative support to the perceptions of teachers within their schools. Various types of demographic information was gathered, including instructor type (what they teach), grade levels, total years of experience, and training. Teachers were divided into two subgroups of general educators and special educators. Teacher and administrator responses were compared to determine whether correlations exist between their perceptions. Such comparisons are crucial in hopes of better understanding the factors that affect the LMX dyad and addressing the challenges of special educator retention, particularly administrative support. By separating out types of educator from responses while linking particular teacher responses to their specific administrator, we will be able to measure specific perceptions of collaborative environments and compare them to general educators. In turn, we will be able to further define the issue of special educator perceptions of administrative support and help determine if these perceptions are unique or similar to general educators' perceptions. Ultimately, we will have a better understanding of whether collaboration needs are different for special educators and

general educators and if general interventions to build collaboration can be expected to address the needs of special educators specifically.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) responses (E. E. Boe & Cook, 2006) indicate that retention rates of special education teachers in specific assignments from year to year were substantially lower than those of general education teachers; in addition, attrition rates for special education teachers were 13% versus 9% for general education teachers (E. E. Boe & Cook, 2006; Katsiyannis, Zhang, & Conroy, 2003). According to a 13-year longitudinal study examining special educators' careers, teachers of students with disabilities are most likely to leave early in their careers and young teachers are nearly twice as likely as mature teachers to leave (Katsiyannis, Zhang, & Conroy, 2003). Further, as reported (Billingsley, 2005), it is estimated that administrative personnel will need to replace half of their special education workforce every five years. Indeed, the shortage of special educators has been described by some as a national epidemic affecting all regions of the country. Though one would expect teacher shortages particularly in rural and urban school districts, the problem appears to be universal, as 98% of school districts nationwide report shortages (Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007).

#### NCLB Increases Special Education Teacher Demands

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. The impact of this massive legislation on the nation's educational system is extensive and wide reaching. The federal government's ultimate goal was to formalize and codify several major educational reform initiatives in one

comprehensive attempt to raise the performance of all students. With its renewed focus on student achievement, NCLB established much more stringent accountability requirements, mandated higher levels of teacher training, tracked many different types of performance measures, and focused on applying research based methods for long-term positive impact on student achievement.

Under NCLB, all students are expected to be proficient in math and reading by 2013-2014 based on established state standards (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004). The results of these measures in turn are compiled into a report card for each school, district, and ultimately a state level report card. Data must be reported by subgroup, including students with disabilities, and for a school/district to make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP), all subgroups must show progress. These measures are compared over time to ensure that 95% of students show AYP. Failure to make AYP carries serious consequences for school districts, particularly if they fail to make AYP over the years.

Including students with disabilities in AYP has created new demands. All special education students must meet the participation requirements of NCLB whether tested with alternate assessments, modified standards, or regular state assessments. These new regulations clearly reiterate the federal government’s focus on special education student achievement, and has thereby increased the importance of effective special education programs and educators to administrations at the school, district, and state levels throughout the country. With the increased vigilance of the community and federal officials of the achievement of special populations as measured by test scores, NCLB has

placed increased importance on the need for recruitment and retention of effective special educators for the entire education community.

With the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments signed into law on June 4, 1997, the federal government continued to build upon an earlier version of IDEA enacted by Congress in 1975. However, unlike earlier versions of IDEA, the 1997 amendments first addressed special educator requirements by stating that special education services must be delivered by “qualified personnel” 20 U.S.C. § 1412(a) (14) (Supp. III 1997). In doing so, the federal government was now recognizing the important role that special educators play in the lives of their students. This trend was later continued and clarified in the highly qualified (HQ) teacher requirements of NCLB.

NCLB legislation requires local education agencies (LEAs) that accept funds under Title I to hire only HQ teachers and further ensure that teachers already employed in core academic areas become HQ by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. As reported by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in a 2003 report, states have had difficulty meeting these requirements using the measures outlined in the law, which is that all teachers have full state certification and major in field (*Meeting NCLB Goals for Highly Qualified Teachers: Estimates by State from Survey Data*, 2003).

Analysis of data trends completed by this group from 1994-2000 revealed that most states have not been able to keep up with the increased demand for teachers at the secondary level even though the secondary-level teaching force has grown nationwide, and many states appear to be maintaining a consistent level of certified teachers. The CCSSO also reports that states have fewer teachers with a major in their assigned field

than in 1994. According to a recent report by the Center on Educational Policy (*Implementing the no child left behind teacher requirements*, 2007), only about a third of states reported that they were on track to be in full compliance with NCLB's highly qualified staff requirements by the end of the 2006-2007 school year. At least 22% of responding states and 6% of districts acknowledged that they are unlikely to ever meet the requirement for 100% HQ teachers. As far as special education teachers are concerned, in 2006, 83% of states and 47% of districts reported problems complying with HQ requirements, with one out of 10 special education positions filled by non-certified teachers, with an additional six thousand remaining vacant because of lack of personnel to fill them (Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007).

While the shortage of qualified teachers is not limited to any particular disability, it is more pronounced in academically challenged schools, predominantly in lower social economic areas, which tend to be urban and rural districts (*Implementing the no child left behind teacher requirements*, 2007). In some states, for example, South Carolina, the problem is even more acute as over 40% of special education classes lack highly qualified special education teachers. Thus, in South Carolina, 2005-2006 data reports that the need for HQ staff in the field of special education is a particularly pressing need.

As reported in the South Carolina Department of Education's 2005-2006 report, (*South Carolina department of education: Revised state plan for meeting the highly qualified teacher goal 2006*), 3,477 classrooms (or 55.25%) of all high school special education classes in the state lack a highly qualified special education teacher. Pre-K-6<sup>th</sup> grade and 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade figures are 35.55% and 39.53 %, respectively. Considering that

only 234 new special educators were licensed in South Carolina in 2004, the shortage of HQ special educators is an area of major focus for the state Board of Education. In short, because of the shortage of special education teachers nationwide, public school programs cannot expand to accommodate the growing numbers of special education students projected (Jameson & Huefner, 2006).

As previously stated, researchers and policymakers agree that HQ teachers make the most significant impact on student achievement (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). But when qualified special educators leave, they are often replaced by teachers with less experience and, quite possibly, without full qualifications to teach students with disabilities. Because of their inability to attract qualified special educators, many fiscally challenged school districts are forced to reduce services to students with disabilities or raise class size limits, which can affect instructional quality (Billingsley, Bodkins, & Hendricks, 1993). Such districts also face the increased pressure of inadequate AYP, shrinking gains in high-stakes testing, increased risk of legal liability, decreased ratings on school and district report cards, and increased difficulty in hiring and keeping qualified staff. With student performance relying on so many factors, it is even more difficult to create cultures of high standards and expectations necessary for improved student performance. Finally, hiring ineffective teachers not only has negative effects on student achievement, schools, and administrators, but on other special educators as well.

When effective veteran special educators leave their schools, the job of mentoring and induction falls mainly on the present special education faculty. The most senior members (most likely to leave the profession) and younger teachers alike (most likely to

move to another school) often have increased pressures because of staff turnover. The growing shortage of qualified special educators in today's schools has led to larger class sizes, increased paperwork and decreased support for those who remain, thereby fueling increased levels of teacher frustration, stress, and burnout. The reality of situations like these feeds the continuing downward spiral of retention and increases the negative impact on student achievement as well as administrators' ability to manage and staff effective schools.

Due to the full impact of NCLB and the reauthorization of IDEA, finding and keeping HQ special educators is an increasingly daunting task for school districts throughout the country. The number of qualified special educators who are willing to remain in the field is insufficient to meet the current increasing demands. The subjects of special education, math, and science currently experience the highest turnover rates of all educators, and it is believed that colleges and universities are not preparing enough professionals to fill these increasing gaps (Katsiyannis, Zhang, & Conroy, 2003).

Because of occupational stress and professional burnout, teacher attrition has become a concern in the human service and helping professions. Extensive literature has been written about retaining teachers, yet only recently have researchers discovered that special educator retention poses an even greater challenge than recruitment (Olivarez & Arnold, 2006). With this paradigm shift, the focus on special educator recruitment moves from an exclusive view of their training within schools of higher education to the realm of school administrators, district staff and the field of educational leadership.

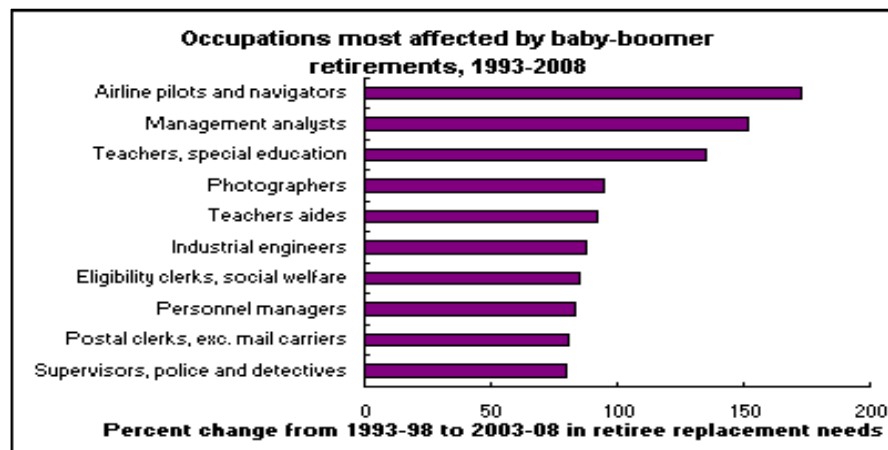


The new challenges created by NCLB refocusing administrators on measuring academic gain for special populations along with the additional requirement for finding highly qualified staff has further exasperated special educator recruitment and retention issues from an administrative perspective. This loss of qualified, experienced staff comes at an inopportune time for the American educational system because of other important factors within the special education field as well.

### Challenges of Special Education Teacher Retention

Additional challenges independent of those created by NCLB have been attributed to projected special educator shortages. As stated in a U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook ("Occupational Outlook Handbook", 2006; Statistics, 2006) employment of special education teachers is expected to increase faster than the national average (a increase of 18 to 26%) as compared to other occupations through 2014 (Department of Education, 2000). Although some predict that student enrollments will grow only slowly as greater populations of students move to the ever-increasing mainstream model, additional positions will be created by continued increases in the number of special education students needing services (a threefold growth in special population students within the public schools during the last 10 years, particularly in autism and emotional/behavior classifications is predicted). Additional job openings will be resulting from the projected growth of the national population, particularly among the Latino populations. There is also projected to be insignificant numbers of special education teacher graduates from the institutes of higher education to replace the increasing numbers of special educators who are leaving the field (Bergert & Burnette,

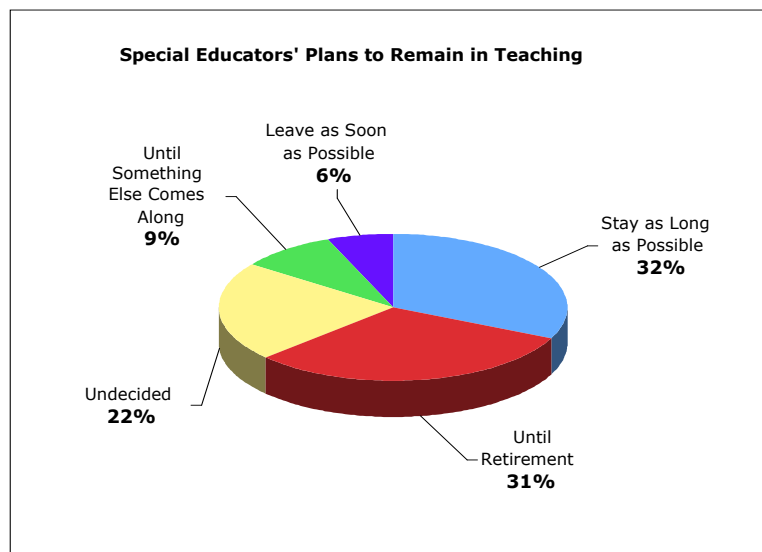
2001; Billingsley, 2005; Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007). Finally, there is the exponential effect of additional demands and increased burnout these factors will have upon special education teachers who remain in the field and who are attempting to compensate for those who are leaving the field but are not equally replaced (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001).



*Figure 1.* 10-year percentage of work change based on retirement needs.  
From *The Bureau of Labor Statistics from U.S. Department of Labor.* (Statistics, 2000)

Extensive research over the last three decades has looked at the issues related to special education teachers leaving the professions. The severity of the problem has been in constant debate. According to a 2002 study (see Figure 2), 64% of special educators planned to remain in the profession as long as possible or until retirement. In contrast, the two major categories of special educators exiting are (a) those leaving the profession as soon as another opportunity comes along (9%), and (b) those who plan to leave as soon as possible (6%). The undecided category (22%) should be of particular concern to administrators, as this group is most likely to be influenced by administrative actions and

by the exit of other special educators, and are most influenced by the extra challenges created by the exit of those other special educators. It is in these three areas (a combined 37% of all special educators) where districts can and should focus their support and induction efforts in order to maximize teacher retention.



*Figure 2.* Overview of special educators' plans to remain in teaching.  
*From Recruiting and Retaining High-Quality Teachers, 2002. ("Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers (SPeNSE Factsheet)", 2002)*

As illustrated in Figure 2, 6% of the special educators surveyed planned to either leave the profession entirely or were undecided (22%) about remaining in the teaching field. Results seem to suggest two components that must be studied with regard to predicting teacher turnover: *attrition* (those who leave the teaching field entirely) and *transfer* (those who move to another school, a new position, or to general education). Of these, while transfer or the movement of teachers to another location is serious since such

transfers tend to be from poor student achievement-challenged school districts with the greatest need for stability, attrition is the greatest contributor to the current shortage, as well as the most challenging since it represents a net loss to the entire field that has to be replaced.

Studies have focused primarily on two types of dependent variables related to retention: (a) teachers who remain in placement compared to those who leave, and (b) results based on teachers' responses on their plans to leave or stay. It is unknown to what extent verbal reports of plans or commitments are linked to future behavior. Nevertheless, from these studies two conceptual models have been proposed to understand the many factors that affecting retention and transfer rates: the Billingsley model and the Brownell and Smith model (Littrell & Billingsley, 1994).

In both models the retention factors are similar as part of an interpretive framework for research, but neither proposes a specific direct cause. Both models propose that the relationship between special educators and administration is complex and reciprocal with possible *external factors* related to retention that are beyond the control of administrators and schools districts.

Despite the challenges posed by these and numerous interpersonal and external variables influence of teacher characteristics beyond the control of researchers, issues of attrition have been studied greatly in the last 20 years in both special and general education fields. One of the most studied factors has been age and its effect on teacher retention. The age function is unique in both groups. In special education, the factor of age is perhaps the greatest predictor of retention while for general educators it doesn't

seem as definitive. Specifically, teacher transfers decrease with an increase in age until the teacher approaches retirement, when attrition rates rise again to form a U-function with low levels at the beginning and ending of the age factor. Teachers ages 30-49 are most likely to remain in the field (Billingsley, Bodkins, & Hendricks, 1993).

Differences in age factors have been found with special educators more likely to transfer from one school to another than older teachers, but this finding did not hold for those leaving the field (Billingsley, 2004b; Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1999). The reasons for this difference are unclear, but it has been suggested by some that younger teachers have less to lose with regard to retraining, sick leave, and retirement, and potentially fewer personal family demands, which may make them more likely to transfer to different schools or districts. This author suggests that additional factors can include moving based on a growing family's demands for larger housing, since such moves would likely be within the same school districts but to a different neighborhoods and, therefore, different schools.

As for level of teacher qualifications and its impact, various studies have produced inconsistent findings about the relationship of certification levels to special educator retention (e.g., emergency certification versus regular certifications), but there is considerable evidence to suggest that less experienced or inexperienced teachers are more likely to leave than those with more experience (Olivarez & Arnold, 2006). Several studies have also suggested that teachers with high academic ability (as indicated by their performance on National Teacher Examination [NTE] test scores, for example) are more likely to leave than those with lower abilities (e.g., Billingsley et al., 1993).

Of all the work condition factors affecting special educator retention, salary is the strongest and most reliable influence. The higher salary teachers receive, the less likely they will leave. The salary effect is greatest for teachers in urban or rural areas and those who are members of minority populations. Thus, 10% of urban teachers report low salary as a major reason for leaving the special education profession. Work-related factors contributing to higher rates of turnover also include inadequate support from administrators, student discipline problems, and limited faculty input into the decision-making process at the school or district level (Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007). As reported by Miron and Applegate, similar issues have been cited for the slightly increased number of special educators leaving charter schools (Miron & Applegate, 2007).

In his 2001 report, Ingersoll stated that “rather than increase the quantity of teacher supply, an alternative solution to school staffing problems is to decrease the demand for new teachers by decreasing turnover” (Ingersoll, 2001). These findings also agree with earlier studies suggesting that improvements in working conditions, such as increased salaries, increased support from administration, reduction of student discipline problems, and enhanced faculty input into decision-making, would contribute to lower rates of turnover, thus diminishing school staffing problems, and ultimately aiding the performance of students within their perspective schools.

Ingersoll’s findings reinforce several earlier studies and are further supported in recent surveys that show a supportive administration as one of the highest rated incentives to teachers (Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007). Thus, special educators who stay in their positions are almost four times more likely than those who leave to strongly

perceive administrators as supportive and encouraging (E. E. Boe & Cook, 2006, 2007). In South Carolina, this finding was supported in the 2004 Southeast Center for Teacher Quality Report, which stated that "...[higher satisfaction levels] with the leadership questions on the survey had a significant impact on teacher retention in South Carolina schools"(Listening to the experts: A report on the 2004 South Carolina teacher working conditions survey, 2004).

### Working Conditions, Special Educator Retention, and Administrator Support

Most empirical studies have focused on the role of administrators in the way of basic material support. Singh and Billingsley (1998) suggested that the principal at the school level and the chief administrator at the district level are the most important people in terms of support for special educators (Singh & Billingsley, 1998). Their impact results from their positional power in creating positive school climate among school boards, educators, other administrators, parents, paraprofessionals, and students. NCLB's refocus on student achievement and a realization of administrators' influence on instructional improvement have prompted changes in the role of the public school principal and the tasks they perform (Billingsley, 2004a).

In addition to numerous administrative and managerial duties, principals are now more responsible for overseeing teachers' classroom instruction, professional development, implementation of curriculum, and facilitation of instructional collaboration between teachers (Mangin, 2007). Studies suggest that when principals focus their leadership on the core technologies of teaching in ways that build trust, they

are more likely to build teachers' commitment to change and acceptance (Mangin, 2007). In a 2007 study (Liu, 2007), principals who enhanced teacher influence over school-wide policy mitigate first-year teachers' propensity to leave the teaching profession from 19% to 4% as teacher influence at school changes from no influence to a great deal of influence. Principals can have a impact on retention, and it can be argued that the principal's role is even greater in respect to work environments for special educators (E. Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, & Weber, 1997; Liu, 2007).

Administrator support has slowly emerged as a major factor cited in teacher job satisfaction, commitment to their work, personal stress levels and feeling of burnout. Special educators report that the type and quality of their relationship with their building level administrators have a strong influence on the quality of their work environment, and thereby on their intentions to remain in special education (Billingsley, 2004a, 2005). With improved work environments comes increased retention rates of the statistically most effective teachers, and more positive impacts on the academic achievement of their students (Somech & Wenderow, 2006).

Thornton and colleagues (2007) cited an additional charge for administrators, to "be aware of the responsibilities and unique needs of these educators and implement basic extrinsic motivators including appropriate instructional materials, suitable classroom space, reasonable caseloads, and realistic access to support" (p. 236). They also emphasize the impact of administrative influence on the overall school climate and conclude that "the principal must change the realities of the role of special education and



establish school climates that reflect its importance. Principals must make teaching in special education more appealing” (p. 237). (Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007).

Studies suggest that administrators understand their growing significance in facilitating positive, collaborative working environments (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Mangin, 2007). Being able to predict turnover and address the issues affecting it, has been the goal of administrators for some time, but the hiring of new teachers continues to pose several potential problems for administrators and the students they serve. For example, recruitment and placement of teachers is time-consuming and costly. Statistically, new teachers are not as experienced or trained as the teacher being replaced (Billingsley, 2005). Turnover and training of new teachers often tends to disrupt instructional programs until they become full-functioning staff members. Further, planning professional development for staff is challenging when there are wide ranges of professional ability within the faculty.

While research continues to identify administrators as the primary agent of change necessary to create the administrative supportive school environments that special educators seek (Li Lambert, 2007; Somech & Wenderow, 2006; Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007), the question remains: If the majority of administrators understand the importance of collaborative school environments, why do so many special educators continue to report poor administrator support in exclusive non-collaborative environments? When special educators leave the classroom at about twice the rate of their general education colleagues while replacement special education teacher pools shrink, when high-stakes testing is tied to administrative review, and when budget

restraints make other areas of school reform unattainable, why would administrator support continue as an area of special educator concern? Each group understands the other's role, but could there be aspects of their relationship that interfere with the collaborative relationship they both seek?

In a 2004 teacher survey in South Carolina (*Listening to the experts: A report on the 2004 South Carolina teacher working conditions survey*, 2004), differences between administrator and teacher perceptions of working conditions were most substantial in the category of *Leadership* (an LMX measure). Areas of matched perception were *Facility and Resource* and *Time*. This finding surprised the authors of this statewide research study, given that earlier analysis of their findings within the neighboring state of North Carolina (in 2002) where it was revealed that gaps in the categories of *Working Conditions* and *Leadership* were more even more pronounced. It should be also noted that in South Carolina, these same categories are the strongest in terms of linking working conditions and student achievement.

The authors of the 2004 South Carolina survey note that they had a low principal response rate (under 20%) and did not report their data so as to directly link teachers to their specific schools and their particular administrators. The issue of small administrator response and broad categorical analysis calls into question the extent to which the apparent consensus of educators' and administrators' perceptions can be generalized across the state and specifically in the response of special educators. However, both surveys continue to show a pattern of similar perceptions of school material supports, but different perceptions in leadership and general teacher support issues.

## Leader-Member Exchange Theory

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory of leadership focuses on the two-way interactive or didactic relationship between supervisors and subordinates. Also known as LMET or Vertical Dyad Linkage Theory (VDL), LMX focuses on increasing organizational success by creating positive relations between leaders and subordinates. The relationship between employer and employee changes over time to create an in-group consisting of a small number of trusted followers with whom the leader usually establishes a special, higher-quality exchange relationship and an out-group with a more formal interaction. The quality of the relationship between employer and employee can have profound influence on many factors of employee performance.

Since the earliest days of leadership studies (some believe trying to understand effective leaders is dated in pre-history), there has been a focus on effective leaders and leadership styles expressed with the development of trait theory (Kassin, 2003). The goal of trait theory was to study effective leaders and determine their characteristics in hopes of emulating their results. This line of study focused on the leader directly and was described as *leader domain*. It was suggested that a leader's characteristics determined the resulting organization through the influence of his or her leadership style. It was premised that if one could study successful leaders and mimic their traits or domain, one could experience the same or very similar positive results that the study leader experienced during their tenure.

Following these early studies of successful leaders, when it became apparent that mimicking leadership domains did not always lead to similar results, there arose within

the field a focus on not only leaders, but their followers as well (Marion, 2002). This so-called contingency theory focused on the behaviors or attitudes of followers, the *follower domain*. The study of leaders was still important, but the characteristics of their followers also had to be considered in determining what led to a successful organization (Marion, 2002).

Leader-Member Exchange theory (Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999) developed from these explorations of leader and follower domains and how they relate to each other, which led to development of a third area of study called *relationship domain*. Instead of focusing specifically on leaders or followers, it centers on a leader's interaction with members of the organization. This means that leaders are now part of a dynamic, rather than being the dynamic itself (Marion, 2002). The interactive relationship domain between leader and follower is expressed in the Leader-Member Exchange: Multiple Dimension Measure (LMX-MDM) measure, which measures four relational influences: affect, loyalty, contribution and professional respect (Liden & Maslyn, 1998).

Affect domain is defined by Dienesch and Linde as “the mutual affection members of the dyad have for each other in interpersonal attraction rather than work or professional values” (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). This “like factor” can vary upon numerous factors, but empirical data support the importance of affection upon LMX development and maintenance. In fact, the “like factor” has been suggested to be a better predictor of LMX than the leader's assessment of members' performance (Liden et al. 1998), and can provide personally rewarding components as well.

The *Loyalty* domain was originally proposed by Dienesch and Liden (1986); this is the “extent of which both leader and member publicly support each others’ actions, approach and decisions” (p. 46). Important in the determination of future task assignments, loyal employees are more likely given tasks that require independent judgement or responsibility (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). Consistency is a important factor of loyalty, which can be easily damaged by a singular perceived betrayal. When loyalty is shown by the leader, employees reciprocate with increased loyalty and performance (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004). In a classroom environment with the added pressures of the highly litigious special education field, it is conjectured by the author that the impact of loyalty could be proportionally greater than in other fields.

*Contribution* was defined by Dienesch and Liden (1986) as “the perception of the amount, direction and quality of work-oriented activity each member puts forth towards the explicit or implicit goals of the relational dyad” (p. 46). The greater the contribution perception of the employee, the greater chance they will be placed into in-group status. This leads to further achievement of mutual goals by the sharing of information, attractive or promotional task assignments, as well as needed resources (budgetary supports, materials, time and personnel). Different perceptions of goals are more likely to lead to weakened relationship and increased likelihood of out-group status.

Closing the present LMX section of the authors survey (appendix A) are questions 50 through 53, which are measures of *Professional Respect*. Professional respect was defined by Liden and Maslyn (1998) as “perception of the degree to which each member of the dyad had built a reputation, within and/or outside the organization, of excelling at

his or her line of work” (p. 49). They stated that this perception may be based on historical data concerning the person, such as personal experience with the individual, viewing the person’s resumé, and awards or other professional recognition achieved by the person. Thus, leaders and members may develop perceptions of professional respect before working with or even meeting their counterpart in the dyad. Liden and Maslyn further stated that the more a member believes that the leader commands respect as a professional in the field, the more that member would be expected to contribute to the work unit and be rated higher on performance would be expected to contribute to the work unit and be rated higher on performance.

LMX theory underwent four distinct stages of historical development. The first stage focused on the context of socialization between leader and employee. Studies found that managers reported two distinct relationship groups: in-groups and out-groups. High-quality LMX relationships, referred to as *in-group exchanges* (Dienesch & Liden, 1986), are ones where members are favored by the leader and receive many valued resources. The relationship between members of in-groups and their employer is based on mutual respect, trust, and obligation. On the other hand, members of low-quality relationships, or *out-groups*, experience exactly the opposite (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Exchanges between leaders and out-group subordinates simply follow the employment contract, with little attempt by the leader to develop or motivate the subordinate.

It has been suggested that subjects’ identification or the general expansion of the in-group (or high-quality/close relationship) will be halted when the cost of the relationship is greater than the benefit to the manager. These excessively costly

employees then become members of the out-group (or low-quality/distant group) (Da & Liang, 2004). Could the instruction special educators receive and the duties they perform as advocates for their students be the very tipping point in the cost priority that leads to administrative support issues? It is also possible that the residual effect of prior experiences within highly legalistic and specialized fields could somehow affect individual employee placement with these groups.

Out-group members become more and more alienated, resulting in lowered job performance and increased turnover. As a result of this process, organizational homogeneity may increase, leading to even less diversity and an entrenchment of perspectives within the organization and a decrease in flexibility (Campbell & Swift, 2006). As a result of this first phase of research came a greater understanding about the nature of context socialization between leader and employee. With this development came the progression of premise to the understand that with two groups of employees at the same work site there would be a full range of employee and employer individual and organizational outcomes (Martin, Thomas, Charles, Epitropaki, & McNamara, 2005).

To validate and further understand the nature of these outcomes, this second major stage of research developed focused upon the group status of workers and its effect on organizational outcomes. Organizational outcomes were measured by such characteristics such as performance, turnover, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and performance appraisal. Quality of LMX relationships were exclusively examined as a predictor of these outcomes (Hogg et al., 2005). Extensive research has been used over the years to identify various predictors of LMX with subjects, including

the demographical relationships of employees to leaders, member attitude studies, various issues related to gender (Goertzen & Fritz, 2004), and perceived similarities of various participants within the leader-member dyads (Campbell & Swift, 2006).

Recent studies (Greguras & Ford, 2006) suggest that employees with in-group status are more likely to link effective performance to their own internal attributes, such as effort and ability. Other member characteristics associated with high LMX relationships include extroversion, internal locus of control, liking of the leader, and in-role behaviors. Additional research related directly to teachers focuses more closely on interpersonal relationships beyond specific traits (Somech & Wenderow, 2006).

The concept of leaders treating employees differently based on their membership within different dyads led to a third stage of LMX evolution consisting of a closer study of the developmental process of relationship dyads. Researchers hoped that by focusing more on how relationships formed between leaders and subordinates the positive worker results of in-group status could become all-encompassing, so that the entire organization could gain the benefits that increased closer dyads produce. Along with addressing the morally challenging issue of disparate treatment of employees ingrained within the premise of LMX, it was further hoped that the potential for more effective leadership, expanded organizational capability, and benefits would also follow (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

This third stage of LMX research identified a relationship life cycle of employee placement and determined that relational determinates followed three distinct phases: *stranger*, *acquaintance*, and *mature partnership* phase. In the *stranger* phase, individuals



first come together as strangers participating in roles within an organization.

Relationships are formal, stiff and clearly defined. The second phase, *acquaintance*, is characterized by increased social exchanges between members – a “getting to know you” stage where pretense is slowly removed and the employee’s role is specifically defined. The third and final phase, the *mature partnership*, is characterized by a highly developed relationship with exchanges reciprocated in kind or better.

It is interesting to note that recent research (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005) on LMX formation has little focus on antecedent factors and outcomes. However, the role of individual differences seems to be an area of expanding research, with Locus of Control being one such factor that has been examined (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005).

The fourth stage of LMX theory development and research features a systems-level perspective that maps leadership structure by formally defined roles of the organizational members (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This stage includes components based on situational environmental factors and their relationship to factors of organizational structure, supported by several of the following studies that have examined the LMX relationship in high-stress situations. Some recent studies, including (Somech & Wenderow, 2006), suggested (through a extensive mixed-models analysis) that although the impact of directive leadership on teachers’ performance was contingent in nature, the positive effect of participative leadership on their performance was above and beyond the specific environmental conditions studied. Becker, Halbesleben, and O’Hair (2005) conducted a level-four study of employees of a U.S. federal fire department and found that defensive communication was associated with lower quality LMX relationships.

This, in turn, was related to higher levels of employee burnout. Finally, Boies and Howell (2006) looked at the interaction of 162 Canadian Armed Forces units placed in five 35-man units of 5-person squads. As expected, LMX within teams was positively related to team potency and negatively related to team conflict. All three of these studies share a common fourth stage research theme: Leadership influence is related to interpersonal processes rather than stable personality traits. These studies also focus on component interaction beyond the leader-member relationship and are of particular significance for LMX theory development, the study of human interaction in unique environments is a large departure from traditional leadership theory (Boies & Howell, 2006). Further, they suggest that team-level LMX may interact with within-team differentiation in predicting team-level outcomes. This would expand didactic relationships to multiple levels of interest and suggests that future studies should not only focus on administrator-to-educator relationships, but educator-to-educator relationships as well. It is interesting to note that peer support is mentioned in earlier special education retention literature.

Despite the need for further research, all three of the previously mentioned studies suggest that dispositional variables were beyond those explained by the situational variables (Kacmar, Carlson, & Bratton, 2004) and infer that dispositional variables are related to employee performance. These studies continue to join the chorus of prior research calling for effective leaders to move from an either/or to a both/and leadership approach. With a focus on the communication aspects of LMX, effective leadership technique allows an effective manager to overcome lower quality relationships and help

alleviate burnout and retention issues despite the environment or level of interaction that is being displayed (Becker, Halbesleben, & O'Hair, 2005).

### Criticisms of Leader-Member Exchange

McClane (1991) argued that by differing role expectations higher rates of job satisfaction may be achieved. Specifically, individuals with greater role differentiation have higher average satisfaction with the leader, group and co-workers than groups with routine role expectation. This means that routine job expectation out-groups should receive more praise and more attention than specialized in-groups. By approaching these out-groups in a special way, one causes the perception of special unequal treatment. LMX theory goes against traditional teaching by encouraging the formation of groups or cliques that would discriminate against certain persons, especially those within the base of leadership support, which is seen as counterproductive.

According to Northouse, a second criticism of LMX theory is that the basic ideas of the theory are not fully developed (Northouse, 2006; Schriesheim, Castro, & Coglisier, 1999). This criticism is based on what these authors perceive as a weakness in present research to provide the detail and consistency to fully explain how high-quality leader-member exchanges are created. Questions remain on how LMX theory explains how different personality types can be part of in-groups or how employees with similar characteristics sometimes can be part of the in-group and sometimes not. Without a better understanding and explanation of these conflicts of logic, and without a more accurate method of consistent predication of group membership, LMX will continue to be seen as a broad, unsure theory.

A third criticism of LMX theory comes from the evolution of numerous assessment devices in attempts to further measure the theory. As of 2000, more than 147 studies used over 13 different types of LMX measures. The most recent LMX assessment device is the Leader Member Exchange – Multiple Dimension Measure (LMX-MDM), which was introduced in 1998 (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). The changing standard of measurement surrounding LMX has weakened the longitudinal strength of the theory and of its measurement instrument. LMX scales seem to have been developed in an ad-hoc, evolutionary manner without a clear consensus on what LMX consists of, how it is measured, or even who is in which role. The numerous changes of survey components are an expression of the many variations that make up the history of this theory and further demonstrate the theoretical uncertainty of its research base. The heart of this challenge calls into questions the use of an earlier research base to draw theory conclusions, when such earlier survey variations did not measure important variables that were developed in later surveys, thus suggesting an unstable survey and possibly an unstable theory.

#### Teacher Leadership

Earlier special education research (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001) has examined interactions between special and general educators and the importance of the administrator in developing positive relationships between them; however, the similarities and differences between general educators' perceptions and relationship to special educators (and vice versa) as influenced by the administrator's placement of special educators in the in- or out-group have not yet been formally studied. Little is also known about how educational leadership training works with in the

teacher qualifications aspects and its effect on special education retention or how special education leadership tasks and activities are distributed among special educators within their schools in the other areas, such as work conditions (Billingsley, 2007; Boscardin, 2007).

Further, little formal research is available on how district and school administrators involve special education teachers in shaping local policies and practices. Besides, there is little consensus on what the curriculum of the training of teacher leaders should consist of for greatest effect. Thus, questions remain on what is being taught, who will teach it (special education or educational leadership departments), how these trainings are composed, or how much actual training is provided for teachers in administrator role expectation or in formal educational leadership programs.

In light of the history of LMX, further studies are needed to determine if LMX factors are related to the placement of special educators in leadership roles. Additional research is needed to examine how special and general educators interact with the supervisors and with their co-workers. It has also been suggested that having and supporting teacher leadership roles should have a positive impact similar to those described in LMX research, including a greater shared vision within the schools, more coherence, inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice, roles and responsibilities that are collaborative and lead to collective responsibility, reflective practice as the genesis of innovation and self-organizing practice, and high or steadily improving student performance (Linda Lambert, 2003).

Recent research on the effect of perceived teacher influence over school policy has shown that first-year teachers stand a higher risk of leaving the teaching profession than experienced teachers, and that strong teacher influence over school policy can mitigate their propensity to leave the profession (Liu, 2007). Few studies were found in the literature that also addressed the work condition of special education teachers as leaders; one study investigated the professional development needs of special education teacher leaders in the United Kingdom (Billingsley, 2007; Black, 2007; Linda Lambert, 2003).

Thornton and colleagues (2007) mentioned an additional charge for administrators to be aware of the responsibilities and unique needs of special educators and implement basic extrinsic motivators including appropriate instructional materials, suitable classroom space, reasonable caseloads, and realistic access to support. These researchers also emphasized the impact of administrative influence on the overall school climate, concluding that “the principal must change the realities of the role of special education and establish school climates that reflect its importance. Principals must make teaching in special education more appealing.” (Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007).

The challenges facing teachers as leaders are large. Unfortunately, special educators’ work often takes place in bureaucratic organizations in which teachers work in isolation and have little control over important decisions affecting their roles (Billingsley, 2007). The literature suggests numerous challenges to teacher leadership, including traditional hierarchical school structures, the high cost of working collaboratively, inadequate preparation for teacher leaders, lack of administrative support for new teacher

roles, unclear research on effective models of teacher training and stress among teacher leaders.

With the dramatic changes in expectations expressed in 2002 NCLB legislation with its increase weighted demands for high stake measures of all student's progress and equally challenging highly-qualified educators components the pressures on school administration to have effective special education programs has taken on new urgency. While these new requirement expressed by NCLB have highlighted the increased need for improve retention of experienced special educators, traditional identified factors related to special educator retention including working conditions, demographics related to retirement and school support climates interconnected to administrative support issues continue to question administrative interactions with their special education staff.

Studies of the relational interaction of administrators-leaders with their employee staff of educators has been just one branch of organizational leadership studies that have dated to pre-history. With the development of organizational research and the emergence of relational studies came the development of Leader-Member Exchange theory (Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999) and the development of multi-dimensional model in an attempt to understand the range of relationships that exist between employers and employees. While LMX theory, like all theory, has had it detractors and challenges it continues to be relevant in describing and measuring (LMX-MDM) relational factors (Becker, Halbesleben, & O'Hair, 2005; Boies & Howell, 2006; Somech & Wenderow, 2006)

While the numerous benefits of collaborative environments continue to be discussed in educational leadership programs, understanding of administrative interaction and perceptions as directly compared to their specific employees and these relations correlated to teacher characteristics such as subject taught, years of experience and leadership training environments as measured by LMX factors have had limited focus. By looking at administrative support components in several schools in both special educational support components as well as measured by LMX could not only be beneficial in our understanding issues of administrative support directly related to special educator retention but in the relationship of school administrators to educators as a whole as well.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

The methods chapter begins with a description of setting of the study. This general descriptor will be followed by a detailed description of the recruitment of participants, the instrument and the procedures related to the administration of that instrument. Analysis details of the instrument is as well as descriptors of possible sources of statistical errors.

#### Setting

The Pickens County School District is located in the southwestern region of the upstate of South Carolina. Pickens County is situated in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains near the borders of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia. It encompasses 504 square miles and has a population of 114,446. As reported by the 2000 U.S. Census of Pickens County, 90.8% are Caucasian, 6.7% are African American, and the remaining percent is comprised of various races, with the greatest growth rate among the Hispanic population. The county seat is located in the city of Pickens (population 3,012), which is also the location of the county school district office. Clemson University and South Wesleyan University are both located in Pickens County.

The Pickens County School District was founded in 1868, and is the 11th largest in the state, with 1,072 teachers serving approximately 16,568 students. The district has 25 schools, including 4 high schools, 5 middle schools, 15 elementary schools, one career center, one alternative school, an adult education/lifelong learning program, and a parent education program.

### Participant Selection Process

The subjects for this study were comprised of individual schools within the Pickens County School District. The initial criterion for inclusion was based on elementary, middle and high schools and high school career centers. Charter schools, single-population schools, and adult education programs were not included in the pool of potential locations. Permanent building-level licensed principals were the only administrators included. Only schools with students as part of a K-12 program were asked to participate. Only those schools with an administrative and special educator response were included in the final analysis. Only full-time fully licensed teachers respond to the survey.

Of the district's 25 K-12 schools eligible for study, 13 agreed to participate. Eleven administrators returned their information. For one of the 11 schools no special educator participated, leaving 10 participating schools. A total of 356 surveys were delivered to the final 10 schools. Of that number, 191 surveys were returned by mail to the author for a 61% return rate. Of those 191 subjects, 159 were teachers and 22 were special educators (13.8 %). As mentioned by Harris in his paper *An Examination of Multiple Predictors and Outcomes from Different Dimensions of LMX Relationship Quality* (Harris & Kacmar, 2006), directly matching administrators to teachers with complete measures helps eliminate some of the problems associated with common method variance (Jamil, Lee, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 1998). Additionally, direct relationship issues can be tested when either predictors or outcomes and the LMX dimensions are from different perspectives. Moreover, matched responses between

leaders and members are required as a measure of the level of analysis in a dyadic relationship (Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1992)

### Procedures and Instrumentation

An introductory phone call by the researcher was followed by a visit to administrators who expressed an interest in participating in the study. A copy of the signed district clearance letter, a copy of the research instrument, a self-addressed stamped envelope, and a letter of participation was presented to each administrator. A signed release was then obtained, with a copy given to the administrator. A presentation was made to each school following a prescribed script with a question-and-answer section included. This was followed by the distribution of faculty member packets. Each faculty member packet contained a release with a copy for the participant, the survey, and a \$1 coin as a token thank-you gift. The surveys also contained a self-addressed stamped envelope to ensure confidentiality and to remove a feeling of coercion or compulsion to participate.

Research findings were based on data collected from all fully participating building-level administrators, general, and special education teachers of elementary, middle, and high school programs in the Pickens County School District of South Carolina. The survey used an interval-response scale combined with 59 different evaluative criteria to assess each group's perceptions of their school's instructional environment. The data collection instrument was a combination of the Special Education Teacher Support Questionnaire Littrell, Billingsley, & Cross, (Littrell & Billingsley, 1994), LMX-MDM (Liden & Maslyn, 1998) and six demographic screening questions.

Unless otherwise noted, the response scale for each measure was a 7-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree). To give it a greater range and to match it to the LMX-MDM scale, this 7-point scale replaced the original 5-point scale in the Special Education Teacher Support Questionnaire. Items were coded so that high values indicate higher levels of the construct.

Questions 1-40 dealing with administrator support were adapted from the Special Education Teacher Support Questionnaire developed, tested and reported in the journal *Remedial and Special Education* (Littrell & Billingsley, 1994). In an article titled *The Effects of Principal Support on Special and General Educators Stress, Job Satisfaction, School Commitment, Health, and Intent to Stay in Teaching*, the authors sought to create an instrument to measure support dimensions that were theorized in House's support theory for teachers (House, 1981). The four major components, ranked in order of importance, are emotional support, appraisal support, instrumental support and informational support.

*Emotional support* is described as administrators showing concern for the spiritual and emotional well-being of their teachers and students. This is done by promoting their employees' sense of importance through advancement of programs, budget support, honors, by seeking their input on issues, and by supporting their students and agendas. *Appraisal support* is described as administrators who create avenues for feedback and communication. Such administrators support their employees as professionals, assist in assesment, and show a confidence in their teachers' actions and opinions. *Instrumental support* is when administrators provide assistance with collaboration, discipline

problems, parent confrontations, and the allocation of materials. Finally, *informational support* refers to administrators providing opportunities for teachers to attend workshops, conferences, and additional trainings. They encourage professional growth, assist with identification of special education students, and provide knowledge about legal issues.

Teachers rated all of these areas as important, but ratings for extent of support received were lower than importance ratings across the entire 1994 study. Results suggest a gap between the importance associated with these dimensions of support and the amount of support that teachers actually perceive from their administrators. A study of administrators' perception of the importance of these factors is unknown to the author.

Questions 41 through 52 were taken directly from LMX-MDM (Liden & Maslyn, 1998) or SLMX-MDM (Greguras & Ford, 2006), respectively, to measure the multidimensional aspects of affect, loyalty, contribution, and professional respect. As described, the four domains of LMX are affect, loyalty, contribution and professional respect. Questions 41 through 43 measure the affect ratio. Affect is defined (Dienesch & Liden, 1986) as the mutual affection members of the dyad have for each other in interpersonal attraction rather than work or professional values. Questions 44 through 46 related to loyalty, which is defined as the extent of which both leader and member publicly support each others' actions, approach and decisions. Questions 47 through 49 address issues of contribution, defined by Dienesch and Liden (Dienesch & Liden, 1986) as the perception of the amount, direction and quality of work-oriented activity each member puts forth towards the explicit or implicit goals of the relational dyad. Closing the LMX section of the survey are Questions 50 through 53, which are measures of

professional respect. Professional respect was defined as the perception of the degree to which each member of the dyad had built a reputation within and/or outside the organization, of excelling at his or her line of work. The LMX-MDM is a further development of the LMX-7 assessment and is considered more accurate in determining levels of LMX relationships (Liden & Maslyn, 1998).

In addition to debates over dimensionality, there has also been discussion about the perspective from which the LMX should be assessed. As described by Ford and Greguras (2006), the prevailing practice in LMX research has been to measure solely from the subordinate's perspective. It was their belief that LMX should always be assessed from the perspective of both the subordinate and the supervisor. Greguras and Ford published a multidimensional scale called SLMX-MDM to measure supervisor perceptions. Similar in format to LMX-MDM, the Supervisor Leader Member Exchange survey was published after the author's survey creation and research collection phase, which occurred in the spring of 2006. It is almost identical to this author's self-created version and assisted in the validation process of the administrative survey used in this research.

The survey concludes with several biographical questions, including years in present school environment (Q53), educational level taught (Q54), years of total classroom experience (Q55), subject matter taught (Q56) (this is the identifier question), highest level of educational achievement (Q57), and whether or not participants had received educational leadership training in the past (Q58).

## Data Analysis Procedure

For data analysis, a hierarchical linear model (HLM) for a cross-sectional statistical analysis was used. HLM was created in the educational leadership research field as a result of increased computing power available in the last 15 years for software manufacturers. While having a history in the professional educational research field, there have been limited applications to LMX research. Additional aspects of this study design construction support the use of a hierarchical model.

This model lends itself best to this study since the intention is to have two sets of regression models (Level 1 being at the teacher level, and Level 2 being at the school level). The HLM model randomized pre-existing nested groupings (special educators and general educators) while comparing them to the independent observation (administrators). Numerous examples of such groupings are prevalent in the various groups of teachers with different sizes in a mixture of settings. In addition, this balanced approach has a normal distribution with little clustering. This results in a unified homogeneity of variance (or, logically consistent data matrices allow comparison), and is parsimonious (limited in variables, thereby increasing statistical power) despite the presence of outlying data clusters. While HLM does correct standard errors and offers more efficient estimates than ordinary least-squares methods, it does not correct the estimated impacts of individual Level 1 teacher variables for any bias caused by unobservable building Level 2 variables.

## Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations of the study relate to size and scope. Challenges to the external validity included population validity based on the overall sample size, in which the special educator population is considered small but common in schools of a comparable size. With the small sample size comes increased chances of ecological validity challenges, with the research focus on a single rural school district, during one time of the school year, in one state of the United States.

Additional factors related to the study should also be noted. For example, the study took place in late April. Testing and year-end activities may have affected the perceived need for and focus required to complete a survey. Since the school district is near a major research university, such surveys are commonplace and may be considered a bit annoying or disruptive to normal school operations. The topic was sensitive, and even though every precaution to protect confidentiality was taken, there is a certain natural hesitation for employees to discuss their employer's job performance, which could lead to a possible Hawthorn effect. (The Hawthorne effect refers to a theorized phenomenon proposed to occur when people observed during a research study temporarily change their behavior or performance, thereby minimizing the validity of the results.) While every attempt was made to ensure the participants of anonymity to compensate for issues of a possible Hawthorn effect, the author acknowledges limited scope based on these external validity challenges. Studies that have taken place in South Carolina, including the statewide report on the 2004 South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey,



support the basic premises of the specific issues of administrative support is cited as a issue of disconnect specifically in South Carolina.

Another limitation of survey sample is that participation was voluntary for school administrators. Because of the volunteer nature of the survey, administrators who chose to participate in this study were most likely to be the most innovative, highly trained, and knowledgeable about the importance of collaboration. This is assumed because the level of training that participating administrators had obtained was above average and because so many were graduates of Clemson University, where they had been required to complete similar research and knew of the challenges of and were aware of the importance of research based practices. Furthermore, it could be argued that by agreeing to participate in such a study with little direct information returned to them, administrators who chose to do so are altruistic by nature and thereby most likely to have collaborative innovative environments.

To compensate for this possible limitation, biographical questions were added to determine levels of administrators' training so that results could be compared to local, state, and national averages. It is acknowledged the results of this research could be seen as an observational systematic bias at too high a level based on the factors of participants being more likely to have higher LMX relationships with their staffs.

Beyond limited scope and size was an additional validity challenge related to special educator retention. Data collected from special educators presently within the schools should be not only linked to administrators by a mirrored or parallel survey (Greguras & Ford, 2006), but also linked with special educators who are leaving or have

left the field in a attempt to address the issue to educators who have actually transferred or left those schools. Only by actively including as many members of potential out-groups as possible within the measure can we overcome what Campbell and Swift (2006) described as the organizational homogeneity innately present in the measured school that could lead to less diversity of perspectives within the organization — and thereby possibly skewing survey results. This issue could be addressed with exit surveys of special educators to get the perspective of those who transfer or leave the profession; however, that was unpractical and too time consuming for this study.

### Conclusion

The setting of this study is a K-12 school in a rural district in the United States. Volunteers are divided into two groups of administrators and educators. Each participant is to complete a release and a anonymous survey (Appendix A). Following the return of the survey, results will be entered into a SPSS database and will be analyzed uses a HLM statistical model. Limitations of setting, sample size and Hawthorn effects where described and , if possible, addressed. Direct correlations of specific educator to their specific administrator coupled with the HLM method of analysis are considered strengths of this model.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### STATISTICAL RESULTS

#### Final Sample Description

Survey participants had to be a licensed full-time teachers or administrators in the Pickens County school system, working in a school that served K-12 students. Nine of the 25 administrators in the district participated (36%). Only schools with a response from a lead administrator (principal), special education teacher, and general education teacher could participate.

The first column in Table 1 titled “School” is a letter representation of each of the nine participating schools in the final sample. The column “Distribute” lists the total number of eligible teacher within each of the participating schools. A total of 356 surveys (33% of district’s total number of teacher were eligible) were delivered to the nine schools with administrators participating in the research. “Sp. Ed. Return” shows 22 special education teachers returned the survey while “Teacher Return” indicates the number of non-special education teachers that returned the survey. A total of 191 teachers responded to the survey. The column “Teacher Responses” shows the teacher response rate for each of the participating schools. A total of 61% of eligible teachers responded to the survey, with 22 special educators participating.

Table 1

*Survey Participant Demographics*

School	Distribute	Sp Ed Return	Teacher Return	Total Return	Teacher Responses
A	47	1	14	16	34%
B	62	2	14	17	27%
C	30	1	13	15	50%
D	41	5	16	22	53%
E	18	2	12	15	83%
F	23	1	17	19	82%
G	50	1	15	17	34%
H	28	3	22	26	92%
I	41	4	27	32	78%
<b>9 total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>61%</b>

Survey Reliability

Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the scale. It generally increases when the correlations between the items in the measure increase. According to Carmine and Zeller (Carmines & Zeller, 1979), a Cronbach's alpha of 0.8 is considered highly reliable. Field (Field, 2005) further recommended "accepting values greater than 0.5 as barely acceptable" (p. 640), with 0.5 to 0.7 as *mediocre*, values between 0.7 and 0.8 as *good*, values between 0.8 to 0.9 as *great* and 0.9 as *superb*. The authors define reliability as "the extent to which an experiment, test, or any measurement procedure yields the same results on repeated trials" (p. 11). If a factor analysis is conducted, the factors extracted will account for middling or fair amount of variance to a superb amount.

Cronbach's alpha was run for five question groups. The results were .99 for the Special Education Teacher Support Questionnaire section (Q1-40), which was found to be superb in reliability. For the LMX assessment component related to affect (Q41-43) the alpha score was .88, which is a high or "great" correlation. The LMX assessment component related to loyalty (Q44-46) was .91, which is also described as superb in reliability. The LMX assessment component related to contribution (Q47-49) was the lowest at .75, which is still considered a "good" measure. The fourth component of LMX assessment related to professional respect (Q50-52) was at .97, which falls in the high or "great" correlation range. When combining the four components of LMX measure (Q41-52), we have a score of 0.95 which, when combined with the first section of the survey (Q1-40), .99, yields a total Cronbach's alpha score for the survey (Q1-52) of .97, thus, indicating the chance of high inter-item covariance in the highest range.

### Statistical Results and Summary of Findings

The independent variable was an overlapping three-factor solution consisting of the building administrators' perceptions as measured by the administrative survey, the teacher survey, and the special educator survey. The unit of measure is each of the nine participating schools.

The two major dependent variables consist of the first survey component, titled the Special Education Teacher Support Questionnaire, with the score be a combined totaled of questions 1 through 40. The second dependent variables consist of the LMX-MDM survey results, which was divided into four subsets to match the four

multidimensions of the measure which are *affect* (Q41-43), *loyalty* (Q44-46), *contribution* (Q47-49), and *professional respect* (Q50-53).

Analysis of variance was conducted for each hypothesis. The alpha level, or probability of incorrectly rejecting a true null hypothesis (making a Type I error), was set at the standard 5%. Hierarchical linear models (HLM) method of statistical was applied to compare means on both Level 1 (teachers within schools) and Level 2 (school-to-school). The random effect necessary for a Level 2 HLM analysis was based on the school location identifier in Question 59.

To determine the effects of the Special Education Teacher Support Questionnaire, this section of the survey was totaled (total support) and then averaged for a mean the same way as the original analysis was completed during development by Littrell and Billingsley (1994). In the analysis of LMX, each subscale measure was weighed separately (affect, loyalty, contribution, professional respect) and compared to the three groups: administrator (Intercept), special education teachers (SET), and general education teachers (GET).

#### Hypothesis 1-Perception Based on Teacher Status

HO1: Administrators, general educators, and special educators will NOT have similar perceptions of the collaborative nature of their schools.

Null HO1: Administrators, general educators, and special educators will have similar perceptions of the collaborative nature of their schools.

As shown in Table 2, the independent variables in the first column were the administrator as represented by the Intercept and the additional classifications of the two

teacher groups, special education teacher (SET) and general education teacher (GET). These independent variables were compared to the dependent variable of the Special Education Teacher Support Questionnaire (Q1-40). As seen in the fourth column, labeled Statistical Significant, neither the SET group nor the GET group displayed a statistical significance below the threshold of .05. Since the required significant threshold was not reached for the perceptions of SET and GET for the dependent variables Special Education Teacher Support Questionnaire, we must conclude that there is no statistically significant difference between these groups within this measures, and thereby reject the first hypothesis and accept the null for this component.

Table 2

*HLM Results for Three Groups and Factor Special Education Teacher Support*

Independent Variables	Degree of Freedom	F-Ratio	Statistical Significant.
Administrator (Intercept)	143.447	224.238	.000
Special Educator	181.707	.456	.500
General Educator	181.003	.107	.744

*Note.* Dependent Variable: Special Education Teacher Support.

Repeating the same process (see Table 3), this time the independent variables were compared to the dependent variable of the LMX assessment component of affect (Q41-43). Once again, the fourth column labeled “Statistical Significant” shows that neither the SET group nor the GET group displayed a statistical significance below the

threshold of .05. Therefore, since the required significant threshold was not reached for the perceptions of SET and GET for the dependent variables LMX assessment component – affect – we must conclude that there is no statistically significant difference between these groups within this measures, and thereby reject the first hypothesis and accept the null for this component as well.

Table 3

*HLM Results for Three Groups and Factor LMX Component – Affect*

Independent Variables	Degree of Freedom	F-Ratio	Statistical Significant.
Administrator (Intercept)	147.554	189.577	.000
Special Educator	181.300	.206	.651
General Educator	180.487	.025	.874

*Note.* Dependent Variable: LMX Assessment Component – Affect.

We repeated the same process as illustrated in Tables 4, 5, and 6. Once again, the independent variables are listed in the first column and the dependent variable changes for each of the LMX assessment component of affect (Q44-46), LMX assessment component of loyalty (Q47-49,) and the LMX assessment component of professional respect. (Q49-51). Once again, as illustrated in the fourth column labeled “Statistical Significant,” neither the SET group nor the GET group displayed a statistical significance below the threshold of .05 for any of these measure. Because the required significant threshold has still not been reached for the perceptions of SET and GET groups for the



dependent variables LMX assessment component, we must conclude that there is no statistically significant difference between these groups within these measures as well.

Table 4

*HLM Results for Three Groups and Factor LMX Component – Loyalty*

Independent Variables	Degree of Freedom	F-Ratio	Statistical Significant
Administrator (Intercept)	175.847	200.846	.000
Special Educator	181.509	1.459	.229
General Educator	182.639	.799	.373

*Note.* Dependent Variable: LMX Assessment Component – Loyalty.

Table 5

*HLM Results for Three Groups and Factor LMX Component – Contribution*

Independent Variables	Degree of Freedom	F-Ratio	Statistical Significant
Administrator (Intercept)	184.832	316.885	.000
Special Educator	183.881	.396	.530
General Educator	182.576	.106	.745

*Note.* Dependent Variable: LMX Assessment Component – Contribution.

Table 6

*HLM Results for Three Groups and Factor LMX Component – Professional Respect*

Independent Variables	Degree of Freedom	F-Ratio	Statistical Significant
Administrator (Intercept)	176.525	140.223	.000
Special Educator	181.955	2.241	.136
General Educator	183.017	.210	.647

*Note.* Dependent Variable: LMX Assessment Component – Professional Respect.

With all survey measures related to our first research question as expressed in hypothesis one not reaching the statistically significant differences required to support the premise of differences of collaborative perceptions based on membership in SE) and GET groupings compared to administrative grouping (ADM), we must reject the first hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis. By accepting the null we reaffirm that within the parameters of this study, and by our measures, being classified as a special or a

general educator is not a significantly correlating factor of these subjects' collaborative perceptions.

#### Hypothesis 2 – Perception Based on Years of Experience and Educational Leadership Training

HO<sub>2</sub>: Years of teaching experience and receiving educational leadership training influence educators' perceptions of collaboration.

Null HO<sub>2</sub>: Years of teaching experience and receiving educational leadership training have no influence educators' perceptions of collaboration.

As expressed in Table 7, the independent variables in the first column were the administrator, as represented by the Intercept, and the additional independent variables were based on the biographical identifiers of total years of teaching experience (Q53) and educational leadership training (Q58). These independent variables are similar to the pattern expressed in earlier tables while the dependent variable consisting of the Special Education Teacher Support Questionnaire (Q1-40).

By viewing the fourth column, labeled "Statistical Significant," we can conclude that "Total Years of Teaching Experience" represents a statistical significance (.514), well above the threshold (.05). The required significant threshold was not reached for "total years of teaching experience" for the dependent variables Special Education Teacher Support Questionnaire, so we must conclude that there is no statistically significant correlation between administrative perceptions and years of experience within this measure.

Conversely, the independent variable "Receiving Ed. Leadership Training" as related to the dependent variable Special Education Teacher Support reached a

significance of .027 with a 95% confidence interval in a negative range, signaling a negative correlation with the intercept variable. A negative correlation would mean that the if a teacher receives educational leadership training, he or she is less likely to respond in a similar way to administrators.

An estimation of covariance was run to test HLM level two relationships (district level) to the school level Intercept to compare these variables to the district mean. It is expected that when one variable deviates from the mean, other variables will deviate in a similar way. However, when the overall school data are compared, we see that it is not a significant factor, as expressed in column 4 (.121) of the estimates of covariance parameters. Since the independent variable of “Receiving Ed. Leadership Training” is unique to both estimations of Level 1 and Level 2 comparisons of the Special Education Teacher Support Questionnaire, we must conclude that the model fits the data and that the effect is perceived to be a result, in some part, of the independent variable.

Correspondingly, in Table 8 independent variables were the Intercept and the biographical identifiers of years of teaching experiences (Q53) and receiving educational leadership training (Q58). While the independent variables continued the pattern of earlier examples, the dependent variable in Table 8 is the LMX component of affect. In Table 7 we see the independent variable of years of teaching experiences (Q53) at a significant level (.288), but in Table 8 it is not within the required statistically significant range ( $<.05$ ). Similar to Table 7, we also see that the independent variable receiving educational leadership training (Q58) is within the significant range ( $.035 <.05$ ) with the

estimation of covariance following a corresponding pattern of a negative correlation to Intercept.

Table 7

*HLM Results for Three Groups and Factor Special Education Teacher Support with Variables Total Years of Classroom Teaching Experience and Educator Receiving Educator Leadership Training*

Independent Variables	Degrees of Freedom	t-test	Statistical Significant	95% Confidence Interval	
Administrator (Intercept)	167.949	13.479	.000	209.595	281.529
Total Years of Teaching Experiences	184.973	.654	.514	-3.103	6.181
<b>Receiving Ed. Leadership Training</b>	<b>184.214</b>	<b>-2.233</b>	<b>.027</b>	<b>-29.837</b>	<b>-1.845</b>

Estimates of Covariance Parameters

Independent Variables	Estimate	Wald Z	Statistical Significant	95% Confidence Interval	
Residual	2125.98	9.456	.000	1727.992	2615.641
Intercept = School	275.309	1.552	.121	77.842	973.703

*Note.* Dependent Variable: Special Education Teacher Support.

Table 8

*HLM Results for Three Groups and Factor LMX Component Affect with Variables Classroom Teaching Experience and Educational Leadership Training*

Independent Variables	Degrees of Freedom	<i>t</i> -test	Statistical Significant	95% Confidence Interval	
Administrator (Intercept)	167.608	12.176	.000	15.819	21.941
Total Years of Teaching Experience	184.907	1.065	.288	-.182	.609
<b>Receiving Ed. Leadership Training</b>	<b>184.087</b>	<b>-2.125</b>	<b>.035</b>	<b>-2.477</b>	<b>-.092</b>

Estimates of Covariance Parameters

Independent Variables	Estimate	Wald Z	Statistical Significant	95% Confidence Interval	
Residual	15.443	9.439	.000	12.547	19.006
Intercept = School	1.938	1.480	.139	.5155	7.285

*Note.* Dependent Variable: LMX Assessment Component – Affect.

In Table 9 we observe a negative correlation between the independent variable “Receiving Ed. Leadership Training” and the dependent variable of the LMX assessment component loyalty ( $.009 < .05$ ). Once again, there is a negative correlational effect, and the covariance parameters suggest that the model fits the data and that the effect is perceived to be a result, in some part, due to the independent variable’s effect upon the dependent variable.

Table 9

*HLM Results for Three Groups and Factor – LMX Component Loyalty with Variables Classroom Teaching Experience and Educational Leadership Training*

Independent Variables	Degrees of Freedom	t- test	Statistical Significant	95% Confidence Interval	
Administrator (Intercept)	182.398	13.091	.000	17.597	23.843
Total Years of Teaching Experience	186.720	.199	.842	-.369	.452
<b>Receiving Ed. Leadership Training</b>	<b>186.163</b>	<b>-2.638</b>	<b>.009</b>	<b>-2.895</b>	<b>-.418</b>

Estimates of Covariance Parameters

Independent Variables	Estimate	Wald Z	Statistical Significant	95% Confidence Interval	
Residual	16.870	9.466	.000	13.715	20.751
Intercept = School	.9798	1.162	.245	.181	5.292

*Note.* Dependent variable: LMX Assessment Component – Loyalty.

Table 10 marks a change in the results we have seen so far in this data set. While composed of the same independent variables as the others, the LMX assessment component is now contribution. Contribution is defined as the perception of the amount, direction, and quality of work-oriented activity each member puts forth towards the

explicit or implicit goals of the relational dyad (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). On this measure, none of the independent variables correlated with each others; therefore, there is no statistically significant difference between these groups within the LMX measure of contribution and we must reject the second hypothesis and accept the null for this LMX component. It should also be noted that having a change in the results for one component reaffirms that the individual dependent variables are measuring different components and that these results are part of a message credibility.

Table 10

*HLM Results for Three Groups and Factor LMX – Component Contribution with Variables Classroom Teaching Experience and Educational Leadership Training*

Independent Variables	Degree of Freedom	F-Ratio	Statistical Significant
Administrator (Intercept)	185.214	234.410	.000
Total Years of Teaching Experience	186.999	.611	.436
Receiving Ed. Leadership Training	186.819	2.525	.114

*Note.* Dependent Variable: LMX Assessment Component – Contribution.

The results of the dependent variable LMX assessment component professional respect as represented in Table 11 is similar to, but also different from, the other components of the second hypothesis. The results are similar in that the results of the independent variable of receiving educational leadership training is significant ( $0.15 < .05$ )



and that once again it has a negative correlation to the Intercept ( $t = -2.458$ ). However, unlike other components of this section related to independent variable “Total Years of Teaching Experience” (Q53) showed a statistically significant positive correlation to the LMX assessment component of professional respect ( $.002 < .05$ ). A positive correlation suggests that the greater the number of years that a teacher has taught, the more likely it is that he or she will respond in a similar way to administrators’ perceptions of their level of professional respect. An estimation of covariance was run to test HLM Level 2 relationships (district level) to the Level 1 (school level) Intercept to compare these variables to the district mean. Results demonstrated once again that the potential of the undue influence of the nesting of data is low.

Table 11

*HLM Results for Three Groups and Factor LMX component – Professional Respect with Variables Classroom Teaching Experience and Educational Leadership Training*

Independent Variables	Degrees of Freedom	<i>t</i> -test	Statistical Significant	95% Confidence Interval	
Administrator (Intercept)	182.462	9.902	.000	13.913	20.837
<b>Total Years of Teaching Experience</b>	<b>186.703</b>	<b>3.202</b>	<b>.002</b>	<b>.284</b>	<b>1.193</b>
<b>Receiving Ed. Leadership Training</b>	<b>186.168</b>	<b>-2.458</b>	<b>.015</b>	<b>-3.083</b>	<b>-.338</b>

### Estimates of Covariance Parameters

Independent Variables	Estimate	Wald Z	Statistical Significant	95% Confidence Interval	
Residual	20.705	9.479	.000	16.838	25.461
Intercept = School	1.241	1.221	.222	.249	6.176

*Note.* Dependent Variable: LMX Assessment Component – Professional Respect.

Measures to gauge the effect of years of experience and receiving leadership training were applied to each dependent variable to determine a possible correlation between these factors and teacher responses. Results showed that the independent variable of teaching experience correlated positively to administrative responses in the dependent LMX measure of professional respect. Participation of educators in educational leadership training displayed a negative correlation with the dependent variables of the Special Educator Support Survey (Q1-40), LMX assessment components of affect (Q44-46), loyalty (Q47-49), and the component professional respect (Q49-51).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary and Context of the Findings

The current study's first objective as related to Research Questions 1 and 2 was to identify perceived differences of general educators and special educators through LMX factors. Results were inconclusive, which calls into question the use of LMX terms to describe a possible administrative-educator disconnect. While recent research by others within the field has reinforced "the traditional separation of special and general education, as well as the development of separate cultures" (Billingsley, 2007), LMX survey trends in this study found that membership in SET or GET groups was not statically viable factors to explain special educators' unique perspective related to administrative support. While some irregularity in the measure of *professional respect* did signal an area of possible distinction, it must be concluded that these findings cannot be supported or considered viable based on the presents results of this one study.

The second objective as related to research Question 3 was to measure the effects years of experience and educational leadership had upon teacher perceptions of collaboration, as expressed in the second hypothesis. Results supported earlier independent research results (Billingsley, Bodkins, & Hendricks, 1993; Singh & Billingsley, 1998)in that a positive correlation was found between years of experience and administrative perceptions. In the second component of this measure related to educators receiving educational leadership training, the results showed a negative correlation between those teachers and the perceptions of administrators in their schools

in the survey components of special educator support and in the LMX components of affect, loyalty, and professional respect.

### Educational Leadership Training

The correlation between educators' participation in educational leadership programs and its negative impact on the perceptual relationship with their administrator as expressed in Hypothesis 2 was somewhat surprising. Despite the fact that the administrators who chose to participate in this study had relatively high educational levels, a general openness as demonstrated by their willingness to participate in the study and notwithstanding these same administrators displaying little discernible disconnect with general and special educator groups as a whole, a disconnect was found with teachers who self-identified participating in an educational leadership class. This group of teachers saw their administrators as less affective, expressed less loyalty towards them, and had less respect for them as professionals, thereby weakening relationships. In an attempt to explain these results, it must be remembered that leader-member exchange and administrative support is about relationships, and when these teachers receive training in educational leadership, it seems that something in their relationship with their administrators changed (Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson, & Jinks, 2007).

While conjectured role expectations of this group of educators could be quite different from those of others in the schools, educational research (Billingsley, 2005) strongly supports the concept that environmental issues greatly affect teacher perceptions of administrative support. Teacher efficacy described as an ecologically determined state

that results from the co-mingling of a variety of sources, including past training, administration, peers, and community characteristics. Research (Enderlin-Lampe, 2002) indicates that teachers frequently believe that they are not competent to play an integral part in shared governance of their schools. These results are particularly important in contrast with additional studies which found again and again that teachers state that they want to be more involved in all levels of the restructuring of education (Enderlin-Lampe, 2002).

Teachers with educational leadership training are unique in that they have studied aspects of governance, administration, and leadership development, training that surveyed teachers state interferes with their ability to have a greater input on issues of governance. Unlike other teacher groups, these educators have studied research-based practices, have begun to develop their own leadership styles, know where and how to refer to regulations, and have studied national issues and models of reform. With a unique skill set and changed by the special training they have received, their expectations for themselves, their students and their school have changed. While there are benefits to teachers receiving this kind of training since recent research has suggested that strong teacher influence over school policy can change a teacher's propensity to leave the teaching profession (Liu, 2007), the question becomes: How much influence do the teachers with educational leadership have in these schools and could LMX factors explain the disconnect expressed in this study?

To reap the full benefits of these teachers' training and their knowledge, school administrators would need to provide formal support structures and build leadership roles

into the structure of their school. The success or failure of administrators to create or maintain high LMX relationships with this particular group of educators will depend on changing their relationships to their changing needs (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). This change will not be easy for either the school-level administrator or the educators themselves, emphasizing the need for further research given that earlier research indicates that although there are positive results of increased shared administrative decision making, there is also a great deal of frustration and confusion, which results in increased teacher alienation (Enderlin-Lampe, 2002).

#### Implications for the Fields of Special Education and Administration

Thornton and his colleagues (2007) stated that special education teacher shortages are caused by a low supply and an increased demand created by changing demographics and the national accountability movement. Policymakers and educational leaders must find new ways to recruit teachers into this field and take steps to retain experienced special education teachers. Similar themes were reinforced (E. E. Boe & Cook, 2007) , that retention is unlikely to increase unless dramatic improvements are made in the organization, management, and funding of public schools by the leaders of those schools.

Theses finding reinforce the author's contention that the disconnect between the special education community and the school leadership community is wide and growing wider. This widening gap of understanding the nature of the pressing issue of special educator retention was expressed in Washington, DC, at the summer meeting of the Council of Exceptional Children (CEC) representative assembly, when the special

education communities joined to vote on and define their Top 10 Issues in Special Education Today. In this meeting of the world's largest and most influential group of special education professionals, the number one critical issue facing special education was seen as the lack of a national special educational policy addressing special educator retention. However, at the 2007 American Association of School Administrators (AASA) national conference held during this very same time period, Position Statement 32 on teacher shortages was readopted with no mention of the special educator retention. Further, in Policy Position #4 (adopted by the AASA in summer of 2006), the addition was made that "only graduate degrees, licensures or endorsements in educational administration, supervision and leadership issued by state licensing agencies through accredited colleges and universities should be recognized for the preparation, appointment and promotion of school leaders" (*AASA position statements*, 2007).

The need for highly trained and accredited administrators was recognized as important to student achievement, but the growing shortage of special educators and their importance to schools and student achievement was not considered. Our school leaders are not doing enough to support their most effective special education teachers during a period when they are leaving the schools when, ironically, they are needed more than ever. This perception is further supported by the findings of Mangin in her 2007 study, which suggested that even teacher leaders with the most highly supportive principals still wished for more support (Mangin, 2007).

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## Future Research and Challenges

It is paramount that research be specifically focused on the emerging role of educators as leaders and that the effects of teacher leadership training does not have an unexpected negative effect upon special education or general education teachers' perception of administrative support, recruitment, or retention. Additional research is needed to make sure that creating more collaborative schools by exposing teachers to top-down relational models, servant-leader methods of educational leadership theories, or increasing special educators roles as advocates for people with disabilities does not further stress LMX relationships or negatively affect retention in the long term. This research focus seems quite appropriate on many levels and is well suited to the perceived future administrative need

The past practice of educational leadership programs focusing upon special education's compliance issues without addressing recruitment and retention of educators and support staff can no longer been the norm in K-12 administrator instruction at the master's and doctoral levels of national education leadership programs. A new national movement must be created that acknowledges the national issue of administrative support and its effects on recruitment and retention of educators, with professors and accreditation bodies collectively and continuously making changes in their administrative curricula. For educational leadership and administrative programs at the college and university level, the challenges are daunting but must be dealt with (Levine, 2005).

Farley (2002) found that the attitudes of both higher education faculty and their students toward the field of special education were perceived as both barriers and



supports to the further inclusion of special education issues in the pre-service training of principals. Higher education faculty and administrator students with a personal interest, knowledge, or comfort with special education were more inclined to promote the inclusion of special education issues during (administrative) classes. In contrast, he found that those with less personal interest, knowledge, or comfort in discussing special education issues were far less inclined to include these issues as topics open for study or discussion. Farley later stated that

higher education faculties often are untrained, inexperienced, or disinterested in special education and, because of academic freedom, may freely exclude special education topics from the courses they teach. Higher education's academic freedom can serve as a barrier for faculty disinterested or unknowledgeable in special education by allowing them to exclude these issues from the content of the courses they teach. This barrier creates a gap between what faculties are willing to teach, and what is actually needed in the pre-service training of principals. The resulting gap is well documented in the literature, with general comments exposing the difference and noting that principals are not being taught special education issues despite their importance to their survive in the principalship.pg2 (Farley, 2002)

Nevertheless, national trends for K-12 school administrative programs is unfortunately moving in a opposite direction of what more and more research suggests needs to be done to address retention issues (Levine, 2006).

Today's educational leadership students are seeking programs that are non-traditional with decreased residency requirements, decreased direct classroom hours, less completion requirements, and thereby less expensive (The average student takes 8.2 years to get a Ph.D.; in education, that figure surpasses 13 years) (Berger, 2007). This increased demand for online and alternative programs is the result of increasingly demanding duties and decreased time free time for today's school administrators (Culp, 2007). With less time for instruction, increased mainstreaming, the continued push for more exemption of some students with disabilities from some high-stakes testing at the school-level, and the continued belief that special educator retention is not a major issue for administrators, there continues to be a false perception among some administrators that specific special education instruction beyond compliance is not relevant to the duties of today's school-based administrators. This mistaken belief is not only at their own peril, but also for the education community as a whole.

It is not only the duty of principals to better understand the nuances of special education instruction for issues related to curriculum and inclusion leadership, but now with the pressure of NCLB, high-stakes testing, and retention of effective personnel, it is in the best interest of future school leaders and the school districts that employ them to demand improved special education instruction from school administration programs in institutes of higher learning and from the organizations that accredit them. This need is pressing, and the school districts themselves must take the lead.

According to Mangin (2007), evidence suggests that districts should build principals' knowledge of teacher leadership and foster principal-teacher leader interaction

as a way to promote support. While federal grants to teacher education programs face big cuts, a new focus on direct collaborations between schools of education and school districts through programs such as Professional Development in Schools (PDS) and residency programs, is a shining light. With the results of this study finding a correlation between administrator support and educators receiving educational leadership training, it would follow that programs for principal residence and cross-trainings with special educators programs should follow a similar model as earlier teacher programs and receive the same federal support and additional funding.

Mangin's study reiterates the need for principals and educators to receive training on the pressures and roles of school-based administrators, and she specifically suggests that principals should receive instruction on the importance of administrator support to special education teachers in support of improved recruitment, retention and student achievement. However, as Research Question 2 in this study suggests, additional research on the effects of educational leadership training for educators, the nature of educator leader programs, and further exploration of administrators' perceptions of truly collaborative environments is desirable in hopes of better defining the curriculum of such programs and to ensure that the goal of retaining special educators is ultimately achieved. School districts must stress the need for higher education to take the lead of redefining the methods and delivery system that they use to better address the needs of the education community that their programs serve (Levine, 2005, 2006, 2007).

## Conclusion

The challenge for all school administrators is to identify and direct system-wide and higher education-based initiatives that redefine leadership in ways that support further research into proven practices, link administrative interventions to increased special educator retention, and thereby increase student achievement. Educational leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will need to further embrace supportive administrative environments, effective research-based leadership practices, and increase support for teachers by developing and supporting system-wide human capital retention programs and collaborative problem-solving (Boscardin, 2007). Districts must lead these discussions and continually communicate to principals, higher education, and community leaders the need to address issues of special educator retention. Only through teacher leadership initiatives supported by principals can we hope to address the challenges of administrative support that both general and special educators continually cite as a factor in their determination to remain in the educational field.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Survey Instruments

<b>My Principal...</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1. Acts friendly toward me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Is easy to approach	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Gives me undivided attention when I am talking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Is honest and straightforward with the staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Gives me a sense of importance and that I make a difference	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Considers my ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Allows me input into decisions that affect me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Supports my decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Shows genuine concern for my program and students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Notices what I do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Shows appreciation for my work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. Treats me as one of the faculty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Gives clear guidelines regarding job responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Provides standards for performance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Offers constructive feedback after observing my teaching	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Provides frequent feedback about my performance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Helps me evaluate my needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Trusts my judgment in making classroom decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. Shows confidence in my actions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Provides helpful information for reducing stress	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. Provides information on research-based practices	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. Provides knowledge of current legal policies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

23. Provides opportunities for me to grow professionally	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. Encourages others professional growth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. Provides suggestions for me to improve classroom instruction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Identifies resource personnel to contact for specific problems I am unable to solve	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. Assists in identifying special education students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Is available to help when I need them	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Helps me establish my schedule	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. Helps me solve problems and conflicts that occur	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. Facilitates communications between general and special educators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. Helps me with student discipline problems	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



33. Helps me with student guardian/parent issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. Provides time to complete my teaching responsibilities (e.g., IEPs, conferences)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. Provides adequate planning time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. Provides teaching materials, space, and resources	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. Participates in child study/eligibility/IEP meetings/parent conferences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. Works with me to plan specific goals and objectives for my program and students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. Provides extra assistance when I become overloaded	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. Equally distributes resources and unpopular chores	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. I like as a person	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. Is the kind of person one would like to have as a friend	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

43. Is a lot of fun to work with	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. Defends my work actions to a superior, even without complete knowledge of the issue in question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. Would come to my defense if I were “attacked” by others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46. Would defend me to others in the organization if I made an honest mistake	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47. I do work for my supervisor that goes beyond what is specified in my job descriptions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48. I am willing to apply extra efforts, beyond those normally required, to meet my supervisor’s work goals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. I do not mind working my hardest for my supervisor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50. I am impressed with my supervisor’s knowledge of his/her job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

51. I respect my supervisor's knowledge of and competence on the job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52. I admire my supervisor's professional skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3/07

### Demographic Data for Teachers

Please circle the best answer.

#### 53. How many years have you been in your current school?

0-5      5-10      10-15      15-20      21+

#### 54. What environment is your current teaching position in?

Elementary      Middle School      High School

#### 55. How many years of classroom teaching experience do you have?

0- 5      5-10      10-15      15-20      21+

#### 56. What subject matter did you receive the majority of your teaching experience in?

Math      Reading      Science      Social Studies      Special Ed.      Other

#### 57. What highest educational level have you received?

Undergrad      Masters      M+30      Doctoral

#### 58. Have you received any educational leadership training?

Yes      No

<b>My faculty would say that....</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1. I am friendly toward them	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I am easy to approach	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I give undivided attention when they are talking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I am honest and straightforward with the staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I give them a sense of professional importance and they believe they make a difference	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I consider their ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I allow them input into decisions that affect them	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I support their decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I show genuine concern for their programs and students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I notice what they do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I show appreciation for their work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I treat them all as members of the faculty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<b>My faculty would say that....</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>
13. I give clear guidelines regarding job responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I provide standards for performance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I offer constructive feedback after observing their teaching	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I provide frequent feedback about their performance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I help them evaluate their needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I trust their judgments in making classroom decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I show confidence in their actions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I provide helpful information for reducing stress	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I provide information on research-based practices	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I provide knowledge of current legal policies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I provide opportunities for them to grow professionally	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I encourage everyone for professional growth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I provide suggestions for improve classroom instruction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<b>My faculty would say that....</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>
26. I identify resource personnel to contact for specific problems for them that I am unable to solve	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I assists in identifying special education students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. I am available to help when they need me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. I help them establish their schedule	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. I help them solve problems and conflicts that occur	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. I facilitate communication between general and special educators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. I help them with student discipline problems	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. I help with guardian/parent issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. I provide time to complete their teaching responsibilities (e.g., IEPs, conferences)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. I provide adequate planning time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<b>My faculty would say that....</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>
36. I provide teaching materials, space, and resources	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. I participate in child study/eligibility/IEP meetings/parent conferences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. I work with them to plan goals and objectives for all types of program and students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. I provide extra assistance when they become overloaded	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. I equally distribute resources and unpopular chores	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. I am liked as a person	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. I am the kind of person one would like to have as a friend	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. I am a lot of fun to work with	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. I defend my teachers work actions to a superior, even without complete knowledge of the issue in question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. I would come to my teachers defense if they were "attacked" by others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<b>My faculty would say that....</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>
46. I would defend them to others in the organization if they made an honest mistake.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47. They would do work for me that goes beyond what is specified in their job descriptions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48. They are willing to apply extra efforts, beyond those normally required, to meet my work goals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. They do not mind working the hardest for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50. They are impressed with my knowledge of my job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51. They respect my knowledge of and competence on the job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52. They admire my professional skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



**Demographic Data – Please circle the best answer**

**53. How many total years of administrative experience do you have?**

0- 5                      5-10                      10-15                      15-20                      21+

**54. How many years have you been in your current position at this school?**

0- 5                      5-10                      10-15                      15-20                      21+

**55. What environment is your current administrative position in?**

Elementary                      Middle                      High School

**56. How many years of Classroom Teaching Experience do you have?**

0- 5                      5-10                      10-15                      15-20                      21+

**57. What subject did you receive the majority of your teaching experience?**

Elementary   Math   Science   Social Studies   Special Ed.   Athletics   Other

**58. What environment was the majority of your teaching experience in?**

Elementary                      Middle                      High School                      Other

**59. Did you teaching in the school you now are the Administrator in?**

YES

NO

## Appendix B

### Permission to Use Copyrighted Survey

Subj: **RE: FW: Group6**  
Date: 11/2/2007 2:09:55 PM Eastern Standard Time  
From: [permissions@sagepub.com](mailto:permissions@sagepub.com)  
To: [TedMauro@aol.com](mailto:TedMauro@aol.com)  
*Sent from the Internet ([Details](#))*

Dear Mr. Mauro,

Please consider this written permission to use the questionnaire detailed below for use in your dissertation. Proper attribution to the original source should be included. This permission does not include any 3<sup>rd</sup> party material found within our work. Please contact us for any future usage or publication of your dissertation.

Best,  
Adele

---

**From:** TedMauro@aol.com [mailto:TedMauro@aol.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, November 02, 2007 11:59 AM  
**To:** permissions  
**Subject:** Re: FW: Group6

Adele: I have conducted the study for my dissertation. I would like to publish the study in the future however, at this time, it would be just for Clemson University to complete the Ph.D. It will be in both paper and electronic formats in the university library. The questionnaire in the Appendix sections of the referred book.

Thank you for the speedy response.

Ted

Theodore Mauro  
864-982-2381

Dear Mr. Mauro,

Thank you for your request. Are you about to conduct the study or is it ready to publish? If you are about to publish, what is the print run, will it be in electronic format as well, and what is it being published in (book or journal)? What is the study being done for, your dissertation? What page number is the questionnaire on?

Best,  
Adele

-----Original Message-----

From: tedmauro@aol.com [mailto:tedmauro@aol.com]

Sent: Thursday, November 01, 2007 3:03 PM

To: SS Comments

Subject: Group6

Please call me back-----:

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

State:

Comments:

Please Email Me-----:

Name: Theodore Mauro

Phone Number: 864-982-2381

Email: tedmauro@aol.com

State: group6\_SC

Comments: I would like permission to use and publish the results of a study using the Special Education Teacher Support Questionnaire (Littrell, P., Billingsley, B. & Cross, L., 1994) from the Appendix of the book "Cultivating and Keeping Committed Special Education Teachers" copyright 2005, 256 pages. ISBN # 1-4129-0888-4

## LMX-MDM Component Permission

**Subject:** Re: LMX-MDM measure  
**Date:** 11/19/2007 10:47:42 AM Eastern Standard Time  
**From:** [bobliden@uic.edu](mailto:bobliden@uic.edu)  
**To:** [TedMauro@aol.com](mailto:TedMauro@aol.com)

Dear Ted,

Wow, a huge fan. It makes me happy just to hear that someone has read one of my articles.

Permission is not needed to use our scale. It has always irritated us to have to pay to use scales, so we wanted ours to be in the public domain. I have attached the items, as well as the items that we use if we ask leaders for their perceptions of followers. Please let me know if you have questions.

Best of luck with your research!

Bob Liden

On Sun, November 18, 2007 10:26 pm, TedMauro@aol.com wrote:

>  
> To: Robert C. Liden,  
> Department of Managerial Studies  
> University of Illinois at Chicago.  
> 601 S. Morgan.  
> Chicago, IL 60607-7123.  
> e-mail \_bobliden@uic.edu\_ (mailto:bobliden@uic.edu)  
> Phone: 312-996-0529  
>  
>  
> Dear Dr. Liden:  
> My name is Theodore D. Mauro, I am a doctoral student at Clemson  
> University > in Educational Leadership and a huge fan of your work. I would like to  
> request permission to use and publish results from your assessment  
> LMX-MDM measure as described in your and Dr. Maslyn article titled Multidimensionality of  
> leader-member exchange: an empirical assessment through scale development. I  
> would be happy to provide whatever information you may need to speed the  
> process. An email letter of permission will be fine.  
>  
> Thank you for your kind consideration to this request.  
>  
> Sincerely yours,  
> Ted Mauro  
>  
>  
>  
> 864-982-2381  
> \_TMauro@clemson.edu\_ (mailto:TMauro@clemson.edu)  
> 410 North Elm Street  
> Pendleton, SC 29670

## Appendix C

### Letters to Survey Participants

#### **Clemson University Study**

Dear Full-time Classroom Teacher:

I am a former teacher, currently a grad student at Clemson, and I need your help.

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Jack Flanigan and Mr. Ted Mauro from Clemson University. The purpose of this research is to determine perceptions of school environments by those who teach in them.

Your participation will involve completing a 10 minute, 59 question survey of how you perceive the collaborative nature of the present school environment, followed by basic categorical demographic information. A one dollar bill has been provided as a token of our gratitude for completing this survey.

There are certain risks or discomforts associated with this research. They include the potential of being exposed to repercussions if individual data was released. However, because of large sample size, the use of number as identifier and broad categorical data, participant information should be well protected from identifying factors. Because of this desire to see that individual data will not be released the researchers will have no direct knowledge of who submitted what data and none of the reports shall contain individually identifying information.

As mentioned, the purpose of this study is to determine perceptions of school environments by those who teach in them and those who lead in them. It is our hope that, through this research, the administrator impact on job satisfaction can be measured and retention rates of educators can be increased. This research may help us to understand how perceptions are different for different people in a school.

We have taken procedural steps to protect your privacy. Environment data will be coded with a letter and individual respondents with a number. Specific identifying results will NOT be shared with school district or building administrators. Any information shared with the district or the administrators will only consist of the actual final dissertation in which the data will be aggregated in such a manner that no individual school or participant will be identifiable. It is the hope of the researchers that the general knowledge gained through such study will not only benefit the field as a whole but the school district in particular in a general and basic informational sense only. All participants will sign consent letters which will be returned in a stamped self-addressed envelope with completed survey to a University Mail Box. These received surveys will be coded and then will be separated from the consent form. At no point will data be linked to your name or school. These consent forms will be stored separately from data by the lead researcher. Materials will be retained for the required 3 years then destroyed. Information that can identify you to anyone will not be kept by the researcher nor be shared with your employer. **Your identity will not be revealed in any publication that might result from this study.** All data are collected to guard your identity as much as possible and it is our goal to be completely confidential.

In rare cases, a research study may be evaluated by an oversight agency, such as the Clemson University Institutional Review Board or the federal Office for Human Research Protections, this would require that we share only the information we collect from you. The information would only be used to determine if we conducted this study properly and adequately protected your rights as a participant.

**YOUR PARTICIPATION IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY.** You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time.. **There are no penalties to you or your school if you choose not to participate or if you choose to withdraw from this study. Your responses will not in any way affect your position with your school, the Pickens County School District, or Clemson University.**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. Jack Flanigan at (864) 656-5091 or Ted Mauro at (864) 982-2381. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Institutional Review Board at (864) 656-6460.

**I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.**

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

A copy of this consent form should be given to you.

## Appendix D

### Internal Review Board Approval



April 28, 2006

Dr. Jackson Flanigan  
Educational Leadership  
412 Tillman Hall  
Clemson University  
Clemson, SC 29634

**SUBJECT: Human Subjects Proposal # 06-IRB-010 entitled "Administrator and Educators Perceptions of the Collaborative Nature of the School Environments Related to Special Educator Retention".**

Dear Dr. Flanigan:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Clemson University reviewed the above-mentioned study using Expedited review procedures and has recommended approval. **Approval for this study has been granted as of April 28, 2006.**

Your approval period is **April 28, 2006 to April 27, 2007**. Your next continuing review is scheduled for February 2007. Please refer to the IRB number and title in communication regarding this study. Attached is handout regarding Principal Investigator's responsibilities in the conduct of human research.

No change in this approved research protocol can be initiated without the IRB's approval. This includes any proposed revisions or amendments to the protocol or consent form. Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, any complications, and/or any adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance immediately. Please contact the office if your study has terminated or been completed before the identified review date.

We appreciate your assistance in complying with federal regulations and institutional policies. You may contact the Office of Research Compliance at 656-6460 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joel Greenstein".

Joel Greenstein, Ph.D.  
Chairperson  
Institutional Review Board

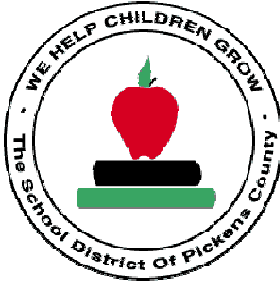


OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

223A Brackett Hall Box 345704 Clemson, SC 29634-5704 FAX 864.656.4475 [www.clemson.edu/research](http://www.clemson.edu/research)  
Institutional Review Board: 864.656.6460 Institutional Biosafety Committee: 864.656.0118 Animal Research Committee: 864.656.4538

Appendix E

District Approval Letter



**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PICKENS COUNTY**  
OFFICE OF ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT / ADMINISTRATION

**1348 GRIFFIN MILL ROAD, EASLEY, SC 29640**

**864-855-8150 Ext. 109**

**FAX: 864-855-8159**

---

February 13, 2006

To: Dr. Jack Flanigan,  
Educational Leadership – Clemson University

Dear Dr. Flanigan:

This letter is to indicate the district's support for your research study entitled "Survey of Administrator Perception of Collaborative School Environments" which will provide selected surveys of school administrators and staff members related to the collaborative nature of school environments. Access to district employees will be provided through the district office.

The school district is supportive of this endeavor and we hope to work closely with you in this initiative.

Sincerely,

Henry H. Hunt, Ph.D.  
Assistant Superintendent of Administration



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